AN: Another lengthy, exciting story full of drama awaits us. Will TPYMK and Sarafina regain their innocence?

Poison

Family Ties

Sarafina awoke in a cold sweat.

The lioness sat right up in bed, narrowing her eyes at the blinding sunlight which was pouring in from the window. Her head had been swimming with visions of Moto and murder all night; her nightmares were more than disturbing, to say the least. She wondered if it was some kind of aftereffect of her former drug addiction… either that or her mental health wasn't too good.

Sarafina glanced at the windowsill, where an empty glass of water that TPYMK provided for her every night was. She had drained it dry, without fail, each time.

The lioness climbed out of bed, her purple-clawed hind paws hitting the wooden floor below. She took a deep breath, closing her eyes and wondering what horrible task awaited her today. TPYMK had said that they may have been more "loose ends" to tie up. She dreaded to think what that entailed…

I hope he's at least cooked breakfast, she thought, before heading out of her room.

"Cheese-O's?"

Sarafina stared in disbelief at the box of cereal that lay next to her full bowl, which was filled with what looked like several cubes of cheese floating in a pool of milk. "Do they seriously make this slop?"

"It's good for you," TPYMK said. He was stood by the sink, washing a glass with a cloth. "You'll thank me someday."

"I'll thank you when you start making a good breakfast," Sarafina said. "You got, like, a cheese fetish or something?"

"I don't even want to know what that means," TPYMK replied. "If you don't want it, fine – but don't come crying to me when your stomach's empty."

"I ain't gonna cry for you," Sarafina said, dipping a spoon into her bowl and eating one of the cheese cubs. She gagged. "This tastes worse than that zebra's— Actually, never mind."

"Just eat it," TPYMK said, placing the glass into a cabinet. "There might be other things to do today."

"What, like making me kill more people?" Sarafina retorted. "Because I find it so fun to do."

"We don't want things to get complicated," TPYMK said. "As I said, there may be some other loose ends to tie up."

"Like what?" Sarafina said.

"Like that detective," TPYMK replied. "To be honest, even if we kill Moto… I think he's going to have his suspicions."

"But you said it would be untraceable," Sarafina said. "That ricin stuff – it's supposed to be the best, right?"

"Traceable or not, Bora seems to have some sort of personal vendetta against me," TPYMK said. "It wouldn't surprise me if he tries to get me arrested in some other way."

Sarafina didn't tell him that Moto wasn't even going to die after all. She had failed to make sure that he ingested the ricin, so he was still alive and kicking. She feared what TPYMK would do to her if he found out…

"There isn't any other way," Sarafina said. "The real danger is me. I'm the one who dealt drugs for Death, remember?"

"Something that you shouldn't shout too loudly," TPYMK told her. "Besides, it's not much of a worry. The police think that your paw prints were too big to be female."

"So I got big feet," Sarafina said. "Blow me."

"No – it's a *good* thing," TPYMK said. "The less evidence there is to suggest that you were a dealer, the better. You're out of the picture, as far as I'm concerned."

"And now *you're* in trouble," Sarafina replied. "God, this just keeps getting worse. So what about this detective? You gonna kill him, too?"

TPYMK stared her in the eyes. "I'll do whatever's necessary to protect us both," he said, which made Sarafina feel slightly unsettled. "I don't plan on killing anybody else. I've already removed whatever incriminating evidence there might be against me a long time ago."

"What are you talking about?"

"It's *gone*?"

"Removed from the records department about three years ago," Maarifa replied, staring up at Detective Bora from the desk. "Logged out and never returned."

"I checked – no, I *double*-checked – every single drawer in that room," Bora said. "And only *now* you're telling me that he stole his file years ago?"

"He didn't steal it," Maarifa said. "TPYMK was registered as being on the force at that time, so it was a perfectly legal removal."

"But he's not a detective anymore," Bora retorted. "I can bust his door down and arrest his sorry butt for stealing evidence."

"If he even has it anymore," Maarifa said. "If it's not there, you haven't got any evidence to accuse him of stealing."

"Goddamn it," Bora sighed. "That jerkoff is always ten steps ahead of me."

"What's your problem with this guy, anyway?" Maarifa asked. "I heard that he burnt the Sumu lab down to stop Death. Doesn't sound like he's working for him."

"I'll bet you anything that he's hiding something," Bora said. "Otherwise, why the hell would he steal his own file? It just doesn't add up."

"Well, find the file, and maybe you'll find some answers, too," Maarifa suggested. "If not, then you're pretty much up a certain creek without a paddle."

"Yeah. Right," Bora said, before turning away from Maarifa's desk. "See ya round."

As Bora was heading out of the office space, Askari joined him by his side. "Have you heard about Moto?"

Bora stared at his partner. "Jesus Christ – what the hell has he done now? Snorted meth through his junk?"

"A couple of surveillance officers went round his place today," Askari explained, "and when they got there, he'd just vanished."

"What?" Bora's eyes widened. "What do you mean, 'vanished'?"

"I mean that he's gone," Askari said. "All they found was his massive drug stash. Either he's using a whole lot more than we thought, or he's dealing some on the side, too – just like you thought."

"This day keeps getting worse," Bora muttered. He ran a paw through the fur on top of his head, thinking for a moment. "Look, put a few guys out there and see if they can track him down. I don't want that cum-splat getting away."

Askari nodded. "I'll get right on it. What about you?"

"I've got another investigation to work on," Bora said.

"Not that TPYMK thing again?" Askari asked. "You said his file was missing."

"Exactly," Bora said. "He's still got it. If I can get my hands on his file, then I'll know his whole story. Then we'll see just what a picture if innocence he really is. I bet he's dirtier than a second-hand condom."

"If you say so," Askari replied, looking more than a little disgusted. "If he took it three years ago, then I guess you don't want to hear about what happened in the records department yesterday."

Bora's eyes narrowed. "Why? What happened?"

"Didn't you hear?" said Askari. "A security camera blanked out for about ten minutes yesterday afternoon."

"It blanked out?" said Bora. "What, like a malfunction?"

"Come to think of it, it was while you were in there," Askari told him. "You didn't pull out one of the wires, did you?"

"No," Bora said. "Why the hell would I do something like that?"

"Then it looks like someone else was in there with you," Askari said.

A look of realisation spread across Bora's face. "Son of a…"

The room was dark and dusty. Not that Moto particularly cared, anyway; he couldn't see any of it, and he was far too high to worry.

"Sit down, you slimy creep," Vitani ordered, forcing Moto to sit down in a chair. He had a bag over his head, so he couldn't see anything. "I think it's about time that you started following orders for once."

Moto giggled. "I'll follow any kind of orders you want," he said. "This is kinda kinky."

"Shut up!" Vitani yelled. She ripped the bag off of Moto's head, leaving him blinking at the blaring light which shone from an overhead bulb.

Moto looked around; there wasn't much to see. Just a long metal table in front of him with a few empty chairs behind it. The walls were grimy and coated with moss. The room smelt particularly unpleasant.

"This is some torture chamber," Moto remarked, smiling up at Vitani, who was staring at him in disbelief. "You gonna lock me up with chains?"

Vitani sighed, rolling her eyes. "Mother!" she called.

"You got a mom?" chuckled Moto. "She as hot as you?"

A female lioness entered through the doorway. She looked a damn sight more frightening than Vitani. Far rougher around the edges. Moto wouldn't have been surprised if she had been an addict at some point…

The lioness regarded Moto with a look of disgust. "Is this the best you could get? This junkie loser?"

"Hey – I'm no junkie loser," Moto said. "I'm a junkie *winner*. I've won, like, seven joints in a card game once. And I'm a great weed dealer; I could double your customers!"

"We'll be selling much more than just a few bags of dope, little boy," the lioness told him. "We deal in drugs that are of a much more potent quality."

"You've got Sumu?" Moto's eyes glowed with eagerness. "God, you gotta let my snort a line or two. That stuff is the bomb!"

The lioness glanced at Vitani. "I was under the impression that this 'new recruit' of yours would be more refined."

"We need someone with the street rep," Vitani replied. "And word has it that he was one of Death's dealers. He'll be able to entice the customers with his… salty personality."

"He'd better," said the lioness. She stared Moto in the eyes with her hard gaze. "You take drugs in your own time. When you're working, you're working. Deal the drugs we give you, as asked, and you will be paid handsomely."

"Sure," Moto agreed. "I got, like, ten pussies lined up who would kill for this stuff. You're gonna make wads of cash, man!"

"I'm not 'man'," said the lioness. "My name is Zira."

"Zira," repeated Moto. "Sounds like 'zebra'. I bet you I could find a zebra, too, who could use a hit or two."

"We get it," Zira said. "You know who would be willing to buy our product."

"So you're making Sumu now?" asked Moto. "'Cause now that Death's gone, everything's been a little... dry, lately. I've been snorting crystal instead."

"We don't make Sumu ourselves," Zira said. "We scavenged the remains of what was left of Death's empire, which roughly equates to around three hundred and thirty-seven pounds of Sumu. It's all ready to ship. We just need a network of dealers."

"I'm your guy," Moto declared, placing both forepaws against his chest. "I'll sling all of it within the first week!"

"You're high right now, aren't you?" Zira asked.

"I may have had a little bit of crystal before you brought me here," said Moto. "Yeah. It keeps me going, you know?"

Before the druggie even knew it, Zira had reached over the table with an angry roar and lifted Moto clean off his feet.

"Hey, what the—"

Zira growled loudly, staring into Moto's eyes. "The next time you show up high to our establishment," she told him, "I will stab two needles into your balls and shove dynamite down your throat before blowing you sky high."

Moto looked terrified. "Y-yeah," he stammered. "Sure."

"We are the Family of Blood," Zira said, "and we won't let anyone – not even a pathetic little junkie like you – mess with our operation. Got it?"

Moto nodded. "Understood."

Zira dropped Moto to the ground, resting back in her chair. "Get him out of here, Vitani," she ordered. "He's making me feel sick already."

"Yes, mother," Vitani said, grabbing Moto by his hair and pulling him up. "Come on!"

"Okay, okay!" Moto said, as Vitani dragged him away. "Chill, dude!"

"Give him his first batch," Zira commanded. "He starts work today."

"I'm worried," TPYMK said, frowning as he peered out of the living room window, holding aside the curtain. "I've got this bad… feeling."

"You always have a bad feeling," Sarafina said. She was slouched on the sofa, her hind paws propped up on the table while she mindlessly watched the TV. "Can't you just sit and chill for a moment?"

"There might be eyes on us, Sarafina," TPYMK said. "You never know who might be watching…"

"You're just paranoid," Sarafina said. "Relax. Why don't you just sit down and watch some TV with me?"

"I haven't got time to watch TV," TPYMK replied, narrowing his eyes. "I swear to God, the same car has just driven past our house three times."

"You're insane," Sarafina said.

TPYMK sighed, walking over to the sofa and sitting down. "Fine," he said. "But if a madman with a gun shows up, then don't come crying to me."

Sarafina swung her hind legs around so they were resting in TPYMK's lap. "Aw, come on," she said playfully. "When was the last time you actually did something that didn't involve detective stuff?"

"That 'stuff' that you're referring to is important for our continued survival," TPYMK said.

The lioness chuckled. "You make it sound so serious," she said. "I seriously doubt that if they can't catch me, then they're going to catch you."

"You'd be surprised," said TPYMK. "I'm higher profile than you are."

"You did a good thing, though," Sarafina said. "Burning down that lab. It was, I don't know… heroic. It's not like they've got evidence on you that you were a serial killer once before or something."

"No," TPYMK said. "Any evidence that they had on me has since been burnt to a crisp."

"Like you said," Sarafina replied, narrowing her eyes. "What do you mean, though?"

"I don't want them knowing about my past," TPYMK said. "I took out my file years ago from the police station and burnt it. God only knows what would happen if that pushy detective got his hands on it…"

"So you did do something bad before?" Sarafina said, raising her eyebrows. "Like what?"

TPYMK stared into her eyes. "My past is just that," he said. "It's the past. Don't worry about it."

"Well, being your best friend and all that, don't you think you could fill me in a little more?" Sarafina asked.

"No," TPYMK said bluntly. "It doesn't matter."

"I think I know so much about you," Sarafina said, "but I guess I hardly know anything at all."

"It's better that way," TPYMK said, getting up from the sofa. He walked back over to the window, pulling aside the curtain.

"Jesus, are you gonna look out the window all day?" Sarafina asked. "There's absolutely nothing—"

"Oh, God."

TPYMK turned away from the window, looking panicked. He hurried over to Sarafina, pulling her up from the sofa. "He's here."

"What?" Sarafina exclaimed. "Who's here?"

"That detective," TPYMK explained. "He's walking up the driveway."

"But why the hell—"

"Look, it doesn't matter," TPYMK interrupted. "You've gotta keep him talking while I slip out the back."

"Why've *I* gotta do it?" Sarafina complained. "It's not like the guy's going to arrest you."

"Actually, I think that might be his intention," TPYMK said. "He must have found out that I was sneaking around the police station yesterday."

"How the hell would he know that?" Sarafina asked.

"I don't know. Maybe he…" TPYMK scowled when he remembered something. "Oh, God."

"What?"

"The camera," he said. "There was a camera in the records department. I forgot to reactivate it."

A loud knock on the door was heard, followed by Bora's stern voice. "TPYMK, open up! I know you're in there."

TPYMK grabbed Sarafina by the shoulders. "Keep him talking, Sarafina," he said. "I'll call you when it's safe."

"How the hell do I—"

"You'll think of something," TPYMK said, before hurrying through a doorway. "Just do it. I'll see you later."

"But—" Sarafina gave up upon hearing the sound of the back door slamming shut. "Damn it…"

Sarafina scowled at Detective Bora when she opened the front door. He didn't look all too pleased to see her, either.

"Well, well, well, if it isn't Miss Screw-Me-For-A-Dime," he said. "Your pimp at home?"

"What the hell do you want?" Sarafina asked. "There's no one in here."

Bora snorted. "Oh… yeah," he said. "Sure. Come on – don't make me do this the hard way. I know that TPYMK's in there. Where is he? Or did you chain him to the bed while you were screwing him senseless earlier?"

Sarafina growled loudly. "Shut up," she snarled. Unlike TPYMK, she found it harder to control her anger when she was around such an insulting person.

"Domineering, huh?" said Bora. "Nice trick for the bedroom, I have to admit." He glanced downwards. "And are your toenails *purple*? What, are they radioactive or something?"

It took all of Sarafina's willpower for her not to pounce at Bora there and then. He hadn't just crossed the line; he had danced all over it. "Look, he's not here and that's the end of it. Now, get out."

She slammed the door shut on Bora's face, having had enough of him. *What a butthole,* she thought, leaning against the door. *I can see why TPYMK wants to waste him.*

TPYMK parked the Junk-Mobile outside the abandoned Cheese-Mart, staring out of the driver's window. There was no one else inside the parking lot; there hadn't been for quite some time. It was the first place the detective had thought of going, since it was the place where he and Sarafina had purchased some ricin to dispatch of Moto.

And he knew that he needed some more.

The detective had already called Chaos while driving, so he only had to wait ten minutes before the enormous lion's car was pulling into the parking lot. TPYMK quickly climbed out of his car; he had no time to waste.

Chaos stared at TPYMK through narrowed eyes as he got out of his car. "Jesus, how many people have you gotta kill, man?"

"This is an emergency," TPYMK said. "I need more of that ricin – *now*."

"All right," Chaos said, walking around to the back of his car and opening the trunk. "Same price. Not that I've got much left of it."

"What you gave me last time will do just fine," TPYMK told him. "And I've got the money. Don't worry about it."

"You must have a lot of enemies," Chaos said.

"I need protection," TPYMK said. "And not just for me."

"I'm hearing ya, man," Chaos said. "Word is that the Family is back in business."

TPYMK stared at Chaos. "The Family?"

"Yeah," Chaos said. "Big drug gang. They're dealing some serious stuff, man. People are sayin' they've even got Sumu."

Oh, God... Not again, TPYMK thought, resisting the urge to scream at the thought of another drug ring starting up. It made him furious to think that Sumu was still on the streets. He felt like shooting those dealers right through the head; they deserved nothing more than to die.

"So… ricin?" said Chaos.

TPYMK nodded. "Yeah. I'm sure as hell gonna need it."

Having purchased more of the ricin, TPYMK drove through a dirt road that cut through the jungle. The former detective's memories of the place weren't very fond, it had to be said. Still, at least he had met Sarafina there… That was something.

Staring out of the window, TPYMK watched as the trees slowly passed him by. The place seemed peaceful for once. Before, it had been rife with drug addicts who spent all night raving at enormous parties. That was where Sarafina had fallen pretty to the deadly grasp of the evil substances… Luckily, he had managed to save her – and he would do anything to make sure that she was never put in harm's way ever again.

At least it's nice around here now, TPYMK thought. *I don't have to deal with any more of those stupid—*

TPYMK ate his words when he saw Moto stood by one of the trees.

He screeched to a halt in the Junk-Mobile, staring with wide eyes at the cub. He was talking to two lionesses, holding a bag of what appeared to be Sumu in his paw. They were obviously negotiating a deal…

A red mist seemed to descend for TPYMK at that moment. *You little creep.*

The former detective's eyes burned with anger. Opening the driver's door, TPYMK reached for the pistol hidden in his pocket. He hadn't used it since bringing Death's drug empire to a sudden explosive halt.

You're gonna get it now, TPYMK thought. *You're gonna get it…*

Well, now he was going to use it – to shoot that rat Moto right between the eyes.

AN: That was quite a nasty cliffhanger. TPYMK is acting rather rashly. Will he shoot Moto in cold blood? Does he deserve it? I guess it's up to you.